



Breakfast with the Animals Earth Day Challenge

At the Buffalo Zoo, we know how important good nutrition is for our animal friends to stay healthy. Our animals here rely on us to provide them with the right kinds of food that are similar to what they would eat out in the wild. Animals that make their homes in our backyards and local parks need to find their own foods to help them survive and stay healthy. We can help our local wildlife by foraging for some of their favorite foods!

Directions: In order to complete this challenge, you will need to spend some time outdoors.

1. Head to your backyard or a local park and take a moment to look around for some wild animals. It may be best to start by sitting still and quiet and just observing. After a few minutes of that, you can also search under piles of leaves, rocks, or logs for more animal friends. Make a list of any animal you see. Can you think of other wild animals you have seen in your neighborhood in the past? Add those animals to the list as well.

2. Come up with a few guesses about what each of the animals on your list eats. Do some research. Were your guesses correct?

3. We're going to set up a picnic for the animals!

- First, you will want to gather some supplies from indoors – an old blanket or sheet, a plastic, paper, or reusable bag, and an assortment of items to act as plates (small boxes, lids to takeout containers – be creative and reuse items that you may have otherwise thrown away or recycled).
- Pick a spot to set up your picnic and lay everything out.
- Decide which animals you want to invite to your picnic and create a “shopping list” of things they might like to eat. Refer to the next page for lists of diets for some of our local wildlife.
- Grab your bag and look around your area for the items on your list (only use items you find outdoors in nature). You may need to dig in the dirt or search under rocks and logs to find bugs.
- Once you have all of your items, set up and fill plates for each of the items you chose with the food you found.
- To make your table more welcoming, use some natural items to create a centerpiece.
- Once you're finished, grab a human snack, invite any of your stuffed animal friends, and enjoy your picnic. Note – wild animals are quite shy and we should always keep our distance. Once you're done with your picnic, leave the meals you prepared for the animals out. They may visit while you're away. Make sure to clean up any non-natural items when you're done!

Discussion questions (ages 7+):

1. Come up with a list of local wildlife and categorize them as *herbivores*, *carnivores*, or *omnivores*. What do those words mean?

2. Create a food chain or food web with the animals on your list.

3. What do the words *predator* and *prey* mean? How can you tell if an animal is a predator or prey species just by looking at them?

4. People are social animals and often eat together. Which local animals are social and which animals are solitary?

5. Pick a local animal. What adaptations does that animal have to help it find its food?

Local Animal Diets

Little brown bat – insects

Raccoon – berries, fruits, nuts, grains, vegetables, insects, and other small animals

Rabbit – grass, clover, fruits, and vegetables

Deer – leaves, twigs, fruits, nuts, grass, corn, hay, lichens, and fungi

Coyote – insects, fruit, grass, rabbits, rodents, fish, frogs, and deer (when “shopping, focus on insets, fruit, and grass)

Garter snake – slugs, earthworms, leeches, amphibians, minnows, and rodents

Worm – dead and decaying plants, algae, and fungi

Bumblebee – nectar from flowers

Monarch butterfly – nectar from flowers

Gray fox – insects, small mammals, birds, nuts, berries, and grass (when “shopping, focus on insects, nuts, berries, and grass)

American robin – fruits, berries, earthworms, and insects

Chickadee – seeds, berries, and insects

American kestrel – insects, other bugs, small rodents, and birds

Snapping turtle – plants, insects, spiders, worms, and small animals

Squirrel – fungi, seeds, nuts, fruit, small insects, and smaller animals

Millipede – dead and decaying plants

Wolf spider – small insects

American toad – grubs, spiders, worms, insects, slugs, snails and other bugs

Deer mouse – seeds, fruits, flowers, nuts, and insects

Porcupine – twigs, roots, stems, berries, tree bark, and conifer needles

Canada goose – grasses and other plants